

IPS Supported Employment: The Evidence-Based Practice



Recovery through work



DARTMOUTH



PSYCHIATRIC RESEARCH CENTER

The Evidence-Based Practice of IPS Supported Employment

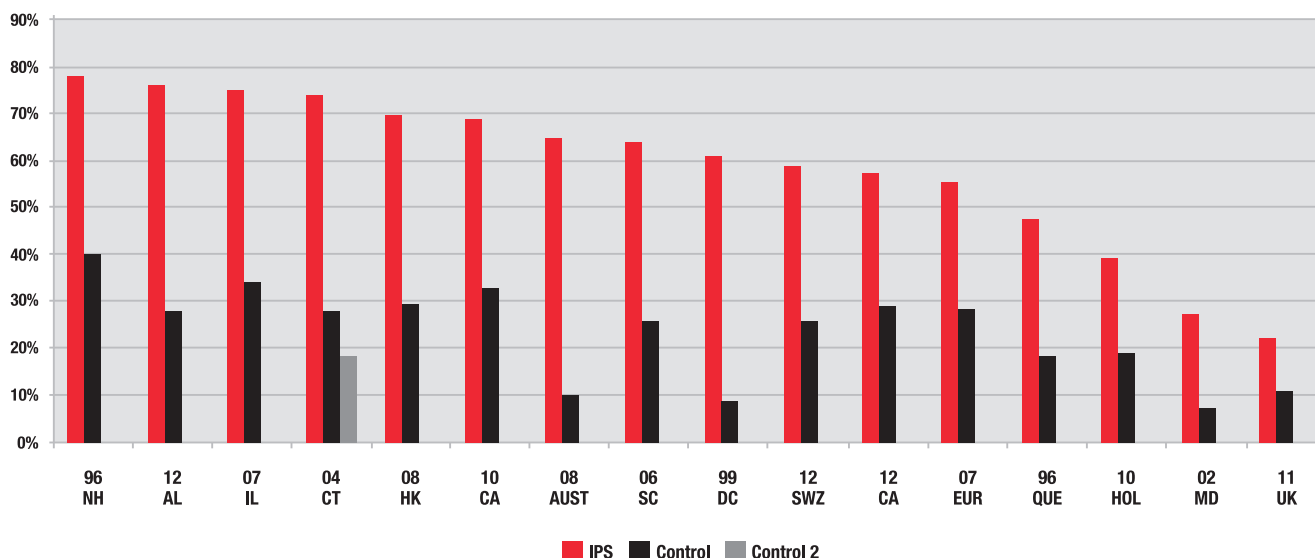
Competitive employment is defined as a job that any person can apply for (not a job designated for people who have disabilities). These positions are full or part time. The worker is paid minimum wage or the same wages as her co-worker if that is more than minimum wage. The duration of the job is not determined by the employment program.

This document refers to a specific type of supported employment, also referred to as Individual Placement and Support (IPS). IPS supported employment is a well-researched and well-defined approach to helping people with serious mental illness return to work. This practice is defined by the eight practice principles below and by the 25-item supported employment fidelity scale (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~ips>).

IPS Supported Employment Practice Principles

- Employment specialists help people find regular jobs in the community (competitive employment).
- Every person who is interested in work is eligible for services regardless of symptoms, substance use disorders, treatment decisions, or any other issue.
- Employment services are integrated with mental health treatment.
- Personalized benefits planning is provided.
- The job search begins soon after a person expresses interest in working.
- Employment specialists develop relationships with employers by learning about their business needs.
- Individualized job supports are time unlimited.
- Client preferences for jobs, and preferences for service delivery, are honored.

Competitive Employment Rates in 16 Randomized Controlled Trials of Individual Placement and Support



1. Drake, Bond, & Becker (2012). Individual Placement and Support: An Evidence-Based Approach to Supported Employment. New York: Oxford University Press.

2. The control groups in these studies were either treatment as usual or alternate vocational models.

to work is a strong predictor of success.

There have been 16 randomized controlled trials (the gold standard in medical research) for IPS supported employment. In those trials, people who received IPS services were almost three times more likely to work in competitive employment than those who received other types of vocational services. Further, in a detailed analysis of four controlled trials of IPS, people worked four times as many hours, earned 3.7 times more wages, and found work more than two months sooner than people in the control groups. The control groups in these studies were either treatment as usual or alternate vocational models.

People who are interested in work are eligible for IPS supported employment

Desire to work is a strong predictor of success. Therefore, IPS practitioners do not screen out prospective participants based upon perceived job readiness, legal history, substance use disorders, psychiatric symptoms, cognitive impairments, treatment decisions (including decisions not to use psychotropic medication), personal presentation or any other factor. In fact, agencies with IPS programs encourage all people to think about the possible benefits of employment. Practitioners know that going to work will help some people focus on goals to reduce substance use, or to work on other problems that interfere with their goals. Employment is part of recovery for many people.

Employment specialists help people learn how their benefits will be affected by work

Each person who participates in IPS is offered the opportunity to learn how his benefits (such as disability benefits, military benefits, housing subsidies, food aid, and so on) would be affected by employment. Benefits counseling (or work incentives planning) is only provided from a person who has had in-depth training with ongoing updates. If a person wishes to work full time instead of receiving benefits, employment specialists help the person obtain information about how, and when, benefits will be discontinued.

IPS supported employment uses a team approach

Employment specialists meet weekly with mental health practitioners to talk about strategies to help people succeed at their education and employment goals. Mental health practitioners may include case workers, counselors, nurses, psychiatrists, and housing staff. Although the employment specialist is the central person who provides assistance with jobs and school, other people on the team also help. For example, a psychiatrist or nurse practitioner might help someone with a medication adjustment so she was less fatigued at work. A case manager might help someone open a bank account to cash paychecks.

“The team to assist one of my clients included me, his therapist, and employment specialist. We met often. His therapist helped him think about strategies to help with his substance use disorder. He also had a conviction on his record, so the employment specialist and I helped him think about how to explain to employers that his life had changed. We also brainstormed together with him about jobs that met his preferences. Now he is working successfully at a job he likes.”

*LaNay Koralesky
Vocational Rehabilitation*





"It helps my wife and me to understand what my son is working on with his employment specialist. We want to encourage and support him. We can also share information with the employment specialist to help him reach his goals. There is a sense of hopefulness when our son is working with the supported employment program that makes a huge difference in his mood and willingness to keep striving for opportunities."

Vince Salvi

In the United States, employment specialists also coordinate services with state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) by meeting at least monthly with VR counselors to talk about the needs and preferences of their shared clients. VR counselors help employment specialists and job seekers to think about good job matches, job supports and other aspects of the employment plan.

Finally, with permission, employment specialists include family members to hear their ideas about how to help the person succeed.

Employment specialists work in the community

Employment specialists spend their time in the community where their clients live and work. They meet people at coffee shops, VR offices, workplaces, homes, libraries, and so forth. They also go into businesses to learn about the needs of employers.

The job search begins soon after a person expresses interest in working

People aren't asked to participate in volunteer jobs, employment groups, situational assessments, vocational testing or any other program prior to receiving help with a competitive job. Generally, employment specialists spend just a few weeks learning about each person's goals and preferences before the employment specialist and/or job seeker begins meeting with employers.

Job finding is individualized

Employment specialists and VR counselors ask people about their preferences for type of work, job location, work schedule, and work environment. They may also help people learn about different jobs so that each person can make an informed choice about employment. Finally, employment specialists talk with each person about whether or not she wants to share information about her disability, or other personal information, with employers.

Employment specialists build relationships with employers

Employers are viewed as another customer of the IPS program. Employment specialists make multiple in-person visits to employers to learn about their business needs. They attempt to be a resource to the business by introducing the employer to a candidate who would be a good fit for that workplace. With client permission, employment specialists also provide supports to employers who have hired a person from the IPS program.

The IPS program provides job supports

are viewed as another customer.



Job supports are individualized and ongoing

The type of job supports provided by the IPS team depends upon the needs and preferences of each person. Examples of supports include meetings with the worker to talk about the job, meeting with the employer for extra feedback and problem solving, help learning bus routes, family meetings to talk about the job, wake-up calls, assistance obtaining work clothing, help asking for a raise or promotion, help reporting income, and so forth. Mental health practitioners may help with social skills, encouragement, medication adjustments, or other supports.

The IPS program provides job supports until the job is stable and the person no longer desires help from an employment specialist. Typically, job supports from the IPS team last about a year. At that point, a case worker or counselor is identified to provide ongoing assistance.

Education

Assistance with education is provided from IPS teams when it is related to a person's employment goals. For example, if someone wanted to be a medical biller, an employment specialist might help the person find the right school, assist with study skills, help the person enroll with the school's office for students with disabilities, help the student ask for accommodations, or provide other supports.

"Mental illness can make it hard to work at times, but I try to push through that. I even have to walk to work some days, four miles each way, but work is really important to me. I feel so much better when I'm working."

Tyler



until the job is stable.

Employment specialists are



Cultural awareness and IPS supported employment

Employment specialists are encouraged to learn about the cultures of the people they serve, and to ask each person what his culture means to him. They attempt to provide services in a manner that takes into account each person's values and world view. Further, they are sensitive to any previous experiences with discrimination on a job, or in general.

"It helps me to work. Because I have a job, I was able to move out of the group home and now I live in a trailer. If I wasn't working, I might not be able to afford to live on my own."

Ron

Partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

In the United States, each state, as well as the District of Columbia and US Territories supports a division of vocational rehabilitation that has offices to provide vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities. There is evidence that people who receive services from both VR and IPS supported employment are more likely to become employed. Strategies to build collaboration between these services include the following:

- Scheduled monthly meetings between VR counselors and the IPS team to coordinate services for people who are returning to work.
- The mental health agency (where IPS supported employment is located) provides space for VR counselors to meet with clients. The VR counselors use the office on a part-time basis.
- One VR counselor is designated to be a liaison to the IPS supported employment team and receive most, or all, referrals from the team. The VR liaison might even join the weekly meeting with mental health practitioners from time to time.



Kenneth and his employer

"I always wanted to work but I wasn't sure how to get a job. You have to talk to people to get a job. Also, I didn't think anyone would hire me. My case manager referred me to a job training program but after the training was over I was supposed to use a computer to find job leads. I couldn't navigate that and things stopped right there. It was disappointing." Eventually, the agency where Kenneth received services began to offer IPS supported employment and he met an employment specialist named Rebecca. "Rebecca was hands on. She took me places which helped immensely because I was afraid to go by myself. She helped me apply for jobs and went to interviews with me."

Two years ago, Kenneth was hired to work at a restaurant. He reports that he likes working in the back of the restaurant so that he doesn't have to come into contact with other people, and he also likes his boss. "I'd rather focus on my job and not converse with other people. It just feels good to do a good job. Now that I am working, I have something to talk about when I see my family. And I can hold my head up because I am paying taxes. I'm part of society again."

encouraged to learn about the cultures of the people they serve.

Other countries may also have systems that work with their clients in a way that impacts employment. IPS teams in those countries should think about ways to coordinate with other service systems so that their clients have consistent support for their employment goals.

Partnerships with Families

Employment specialists are encouraged to ask each person whether there is a family member or friend whom she would like to include in her employment plan. An identified family member might meet with the employment specialist and job seeker to share ideas for a good job fit or job supports. Family members should not be asked to nag the person to follow through with the employment plan, as employment should not become a source of conflict for the family. But many family members, even those who were initially concerned about work for their family member, report that it is encouraging to see the person return to work and that they value being part of that process.

Collaboration with Employers

Employers are interested in working with employment specialists who understand their business needs and can introduce them to qualified candidates. Another incentive to work with IPS programs is that employers know that the employment specialist will provide ongoing support. In fact, some employers have commented that they wish all of their other employees had the same types of supports.

Yvonne is a very dependable person. We know that she will be here and she'll be on time. She's friendly and has a positive attitude."

– Daisy, Store Manager

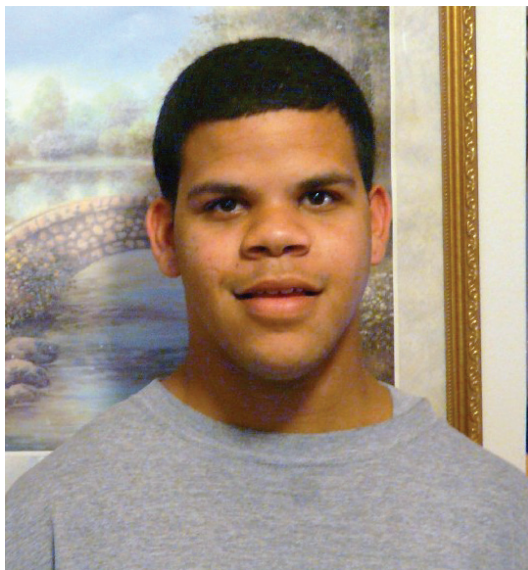
My experience with the program has been that it is another resource to help me meet our staffing needs. The employment specialists make my life easier by becoming familiar with our business and knowing what we are looking for.

– Jim, Human Resource Manager

"It's hard to look for a job on your own because the company doesn't know you. My employment specialist was with me in the interview. I think the manager felt more comfortable about interviewing me because he knew my employment specialist. He trusted her to bring in a good candidate."

Chin





"I'm finishing my high school degree and working a part-time job. You can't rely on benefits. I'm thinking about my future."

Gilbert



For more information about IPS supported employment, including an online training program, program tools, IPS manuals, posters, demonstration videos, fidelity materials and more, go to <http://dartmouth.edu/~ips>

Or call the Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center
(603) 448-0263

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